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ABSTRACT

This program examines the history of U.S.-Haitian affairs and the events leading up to the recent deployment of U.S. troops to Haiti. This program provides essential background to those interested in the current and future situation in Haiti as it struggles with democracy-building. The study guide offers questions to use before viewing the video, questions to follow the video, classroom activities to focus student thinking on the problem, topics for further research, and a list of eight resources. (EH)

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AMERICA'S DEFENSE MONITOR

Educational TV for the Classroom

STUDY GUIDE FOR

THE ROAD TO U.S. INTERVENTION IN HAITI

EPISODE # 802

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THE ROAD TO U.S. INTERVENTION IN HAITI

This thirty minute program takes a look at the history of U.S.-Haitian affairs and the events leading up to the recent deployment of American troops to that country.

The U.S. invaded Haiti in 1915 and remained there until 1934, leaving the national guard as the only intact and organized institution. Since then, Haiti has been dominated by dictators and military leaders. Yet, in the atmosphere of the Cold War, the U.S. considered Haiti among its allies, largely due to its being "in our backyard", supplying military and developmental aid and training to Haitian officers in American military schools. Haiti saw its first democratic elections in 1990 when Jean Bertrand Aristide came to power with 67% of the vote. Less than a year later, Aristide was overthrown in a military coup. The U.S. responded through economic sanctions, varying refugee policies and joining in international condemnation of the military government. While these actions were aimed at weakening the military rule, some argue that they in fact made life more difficult for the lower classes. Repeated refusal of the military leaders to step down in response to threats eventually led to UN authorization of a U.S.-led invasion in July of 1994. Last minute diplomacy in the face of a visible threat provoked the military dictator, Raul Cedras, to agree to step down.

This program provides an essential background to anyone interested in the current and future situation in

Haiti. The multinational force, composed predominantly of U.S. troops, faces an indeterminate mandate in a devastated country. Policy experts and Aristide's own spokesman discuss the legacy of American involvement in Haitian affairs and whether the military is the appropriate agency for democracy-building.

THIS PROGRAM FEATURES:

Randall Robinson, Executive Director, TransAfrica.

Dr. Paul Farmer, M.D., Partners in Health, author of The Uses of Haiti.

Elliott Abrams, Senior Fellow, Hudson Institute, Former Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs under the Reagan Administration.

Jean-Claude Martineau, Spokesman for President Aristide.

James Matlack, Director, American Friends Service Committee.

Harriet Babbitt, U.S. Ambassador to the Organization of American States.

BEFORE VIEWING QUESTIONS

1) In what ways could a country intervene abroad?
2) Given the end of the Cold War, what changes, if any, should there be in U.S. foreign policy?
3) What do you think the role of the United Nations should be in the new world order?
4) What European nation colonized Haiti in the 1700's?
5) What characterizes a military dictatorship?
6) Give examples of past foreign intervention in Haiti?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AFTER VIEWING

1) Did the United States have a moral obligation to intervene in Haiti?
2) Can social and economic problems be solved by military means?
3) What is the role of the United Nations in situations like Haiti, which do not transcend international borders?
4) Where should our foreign aid dollars be spent?
5) What was the justification for the United States to train the Haitian military?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Imagine that it is the eve of the planned American invasion of Haiti. Split the students into groups. Assign each group to prepare an argument on why the United States should or should not intervene in Haiti, explaining that there still exists a chance for last minute diplomatic negotiation. Then, have the group(s) that argued for intervention prepare another argument on what form the intervention should take. The group(s) arguing against intervention should try to propose alternative plans. If this proves difficult, have the students brainstorm a list of pros and cons for invasion and a list of alternative modes of actions.

RESEARCH TOPICS

1) In the program, Jean-Claude Martineau, President Aristide's spokesman discusses the U.S. occupation of Haiti from 1915-1934. He mentions land reform and the creation of a national guard as having detrimental effects on the Haitian economy and infrastructure. Research the period of occupation in an attempt to shed light on the overall effects of the occupation.

2) Elliott Abrams, Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute and Former Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs under the Reagan administration, in speaking about military dictatorships in Latin America in the context of the Cold War, states that while the U.S. "did not install these dictatorships... any government that was anti-communist clearly had a leg up." Research justifications for U.S. support of Haiti in the Cold War era.

3) The program focuses on the history of American-Haitian relations in the 20th century. Research Haiti's relationships with foreign nations in the 19th century. How would you compare Haiti's position on the international spectrum in the 19th century with its position today?

RESOURCES

Best, Richard A., Jr., *The U.S. Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, Congressional Research Service: May 26, 1994.

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Taft-Morales, Maureen and Steven R. Bowman, *Haiti's Political Crisis: U.S. Policy Options*, Congressional Research Service: July 14, 1994.

Terror Prevails in Haiti: Human Rights Violations and Failed Diplomacy, Human Rights Watch/Americas Watch, Vol. 6, No. 5: April 1994.

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America's Defense Monitor offers an in-depth look at our nation's military and security-related policies. Each thirty minute program is a visually stimulating and entertaining resource for the high school or college classroom. Episodes can be used to supplement regular classroom material or to introduce new topics. By bringing topics to life through the medium of video, this award-winning series can help arouse student interest in crucial issues.

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